

# THE SURVIVORS<sup>1</sup>

## *A Memorial Day Story*

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*From The Outlook*

IN the year 1868, when Memorial Day was instituted, Fosterville had thirty-five men in its parade. Fosterville was a border town; in it enthusiasm had run high, and many more men had enlisted than those required by the draft. All the men were on the same side but Adam Foust, who, slipping away, joined himself to the troops of his mother's Southern State. It could not have been any great trial for Adam to fight against most of his companions in Fosterville, for there was only one of them with whom he did not quarrel. That one was his cousin Henry, from whom he was inseparable, and of whose friendship for any other boys he was intensely jealous. Henry was a frank, open-hearted lad who would have lived on good terms with the whole world if Adam had allowed him to.

Adam did not return to Fosterville until the morning of the first Memorial Day, of whose establishment he was unaware. He had been ill for months, and it was only now that he had earned enough to make his way home. He was slightly lame, and he had lost two fingers of his left hand. He got down from the train at the station, and found himself at once in a great crowd. He knew no one, and no one seemed to know him. Without

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asking any questions, he started up the street. He meant to go, first of all, to the house of his cousin Henry, and then to set about making arrangements to resume his long-interrupted business, that of a saddler, which he could still follow in spite of his injury.

As he hurried along he heard the sound of band music, and realized that some sort of a procession was advancing. With the throng about him he pressed to the curb. The tune was one which he hated; the colors he hated also; the marchers, all but one, he had never liked. There was Newton Towne, with a sergeant's stripe on his blue sleeve; there was Edward Green, a captain; there was Peter Allinson, a color-bearer. At their head, taller, handsomer, dearer than ever to Adam's jealous eyes, walked Henry Foust. In an instant of forgetfulness Adam waved his hand. But Henry did not see; Adam chose to think that he saw and would not answer. The veterans passed, and Adam drew back and was lost in the crowd.

But Adam had a parade of his own. In the evening, when the music and the speeches were over and the half-dozen graves of those of Fosterville's young men who had been brought home had been heaped with flowers, and Fosterville sat on doorsteps and porches talking about the day, Adam put on a gray uniform and walked from one end of the village to the other. These were people who had known him always; the word flew from step to step. Many persons spoke to him, some laughed, and a few jeered. To no one did Adam pay any heed. Past the house of Newton Towne, past the store of Ed Green, past the wide lawn of Henry Foust, walked Adam, his hands clasped behind his back, as though to make more perpendicular than perpendicularity itself that stiff backbone. Henry Foust ran down the steps and out to the gate.

"Oh, Adam!" cried he.

Adam stopped, stock-still. He could see Peter Allinson and Newton Towne, and even Ed Green, on Henry's

porch. They were all having ice-cream and cake together.

"Well, what?" said he, roughly.

"Won't you shake hands with me?"

"No," said Adam.

"Won't you come in?"

"Never."

Still Henry persisted.

"Some one might do you harm, Adam."

"Let them!" said Adam.

Then Adam walked on alone. Adam walked alone for forty years.

Not only on Memorial Day did he don his gray uniform and make the rounds of the village. When the Fosterville Grand Army Post met on Friday evenings in the post room, Adam managed to meet most of the members either going or returning. He and his gray suit became gradually so familiar to the village that no one turned his head or glanced up from book or paper to see him go by. He had from time to time a new suit, and he ordered from somewhere in the South a succession of gray, broad-brimmed military hats. The farther the war sank into the past, the straighter grew old Adam's back, the prouder his head. Sometimes, early in the forty years, the acquaintances of his childhood, especially the women, remonstrated with him.

"The war's over, Adam," they would say. "Can't you forget it?"

"Those G. A. R. fellows don't forget it," Adam would answer. "They have n't changed their principles. Why should I change mine?"

"But you might make up with Henry."

"That's nobody's business but my own."

"But when you were children you were never separated. Make up, Adam."

"When Henry needs me, I'll help him," said Adam.

"Henry will never need you. Look at all he's got!"

"Well, then, I don't need him," declared Adam, as he

walked away. He went back to his saddler shop, where he sat all day stitching. He had ample time to think of Henry and the past.

"Brought up like twins!" he would say. "Sharing like brothers! Now he has a fine business and a fine house and fine children, and I have nothing. But I have my principles. I ain't never truckled to him. Some day he'll need me, you'll see!"

As Adam grew older, it became more and more certain that Henry would never need him for anything. Henry tried again and again to make friends, but Adam would have none of him. He talked more and more to himself as he sat at his work.

"Used to help him over the brook and bait his hook for him. Even built corn-cob houses for him to knock down, that much littler he was than me. Stepped out of the race when I found he wanted Annie. He might ask me for *something!*" Adam seemed often to be growing childish.

By the year 1875 fifteen of Fosterville's thirty-five veterans had died. The men who survived the war were, for the most part, not strong men, and weaknesses established in prisons and on long marches asserted themselves. Fifteen times the Fosterville Post paraded to the cemetery and read its committal service and fired its salute. For these parades Adam did not put on his gray uniform.

During the next twenty years deaths were fewer. Fosterville prospered as never before; it built factories and an electric car line. Of all its enterprises Henry Foust was at the head. He enlarged his house and bought farms and grew handsomer as he grew older. Everybody loved him; all Fosterville, except Adam, sought his company. It seemed sometimes as though Adam would almost die from loneliness and jealousy.

"Henry Foust sittin' with Ed Green!" said Adam to himself, as though he could never accustom his eyes to this phenomenon. "Henry consortin' with Newt Towne!"



The Grand Army post also grew in importance. It paraded each year with more ceremony; it imported fine music and great speakers for Memorial Day.

Presently the sad procession to the cemetery began once more. There was a long, cold winter, with many cases of pneumonia, and three veterans succumbed; there was an intensely hot summer, and twice in one month the post read its committal service and fired its salute. A few years more, and the post numbered but three. Past them still on post evenings walked Adam, head in air, hands clasped behind his back. There was Edward Green, round, fat, who puffed and panted; there was Newton Towne, who walked, in spite of palsy, as though he had won the the battle of Gettysburg; there was, last of all, Henry Foust, who at seventy-five was hale and strong. Usually a tall son walked beside him, or a grandchild clung to his hand. He was almost never alone; it was as though every one who knew him tried to have as much as possible of his company. Past him with a grave nod walked Adam. Adam was two years older than Henry; it required more and more stretching of arms behind his back to keep his shoulders straight.

In April Newton Towne was taken ill and died. Edward Green was terrified, though he considered himself, in spite of his shortness of breath, a strong man.

"Don't let anything happen to you, Henry," he would say. "Don't let anything get you, Henry. I can't march alone."

"I'll be there," Henry would reassure him. Only one look at Henry, and the most alarmed would have been comforted.

"It would kill me to march alone," said Edward Green.

As if Fosterville realized that it could not continue long to show its devotion to its veterans, it made this year special preparations for Memorial Day. The Fosterville Band practiced elaborate music, the children were drilled in marching. The children were to precede

the veterans to the cemetery and were to scatter flowers over the graves. Houses were gayly decorated, flags and banners floated in the pleasant spring breeze. Early in the morning carriages and wagons began to bring in the country folk.

Adam Foust realized as well as Fosterville that the parades of veterans were drawing to their close.

"This may be the last time I can show my principles," said he, with grim setting of his lips. "I will put on my gray coat early in the morning."

Though the two veterans were to march to the cemetery, carriages were provided to bring them home. Fosterville meant to be as careful as possible of its treasures.

"I don't need any carriage to ride in, like Ed Green," said Adam proudly. "I could march out and back. Perhaps Ed Green will have to ride out as well as back."

But Edward Green neither rode nor walked. The day turned suddenly warm, the heat and excitement accelerated his already rapid breathing, and the doctor forbade his setting foot to the ground.

"But I will!" cried Edward, in whom the spirit of war still lived.

"No," said the doctor.

"Then I will ride."

"You will stay in bed," said the doctor.

So without Edward Green the parade was formed. Before the court-house waited the band, and the long line of school-children, and the burgess, and the fire company, and the distinguished stranger who was to make the address, until Henry Foust appeared, in his blue suit, with his flag on his breast and his bouquet in his hand. On each side of him walked a tall, middle-aged son, who seemed to hand him over reluctantly to the marshal, who was to escort him to his place. Smilingly he spoke to the marshal, but he was the only one who smiled or spoke. For an instant men and women broke off in the middle of their sentences, a husky something in their throats; children looked up at him with awe.

Even his own grand-children did not dare to wave or call from their places in the ranks. Then the storm of cheers broke.

Round the next corner Adam Foust waited. He was clad in his gray uniform—those who looked at him closely saw with astonishment that it was a new uniform; his brows met in a frown, his gray moustache seemed to bristle.

"How he hates them!" said one citizen of Fosterville to another. "Just look at poor Adam!"

"Used to bait his hook for him," Adam was saying. "Used to carry him pick-a-back! Used to go halves with him on everything. Now he walks with Ed Green!"

Adam pressed forward to the curb. The band was playing "Marching Through Georgia," which he hated; everybody was cheering. The volume of sound was deafening.

"Cheering Ed Green!" said Adam. "Fat! Lazy! Did n't have a wound. Dare say he hid behind a tree! Dare say —"

The band was in sight now, the back of the drum-major appeared, then all the musicians swung round the corner. After them came the little children with their flowers and their shining faces.

"Him and Ed Green next," said old Adam.

But Henry walked alone. Adam's whole body jerked in his astonishment. He heard some one say that Edward Green was sick, that the doctor had forbidden him to march, or even to ride. As he pressed nearer the curb he heard the admiring comments of the crowd.

"Is n't he magnificent!"

"See his beautiful flowers! His grandchildren always send him his flowers."

"He's our first citizen."

"He's mine!" Adam wanted to cry out. "He's mine!"

Never had Adam felt so miserable, so jealous, so

heartsick. His eyes were filled with the great figure. Henry was, in truth, magnificent, not only in himself, but in what he represented. He seemed symbolic of a great era of the past, and at the same time of a new age which was advancing. Old Adam understood all his glory.

"He's mine!" said old Adam again, foolishly.

Then Adam leaned forward with startled, staring eyes. Henry had bowed and smiled in answer to the cheers. Across the street his own house was a mass of color — red, white, and blue over windows and doors, gay dresses on the porch. On each side the pavement was crowded with a shouting multitude. Surely no hero had ever had a more glorious passage through the streets of his birth-place!

But old Adam saw that Henry's face blanched, that there appeared suddenly upon it an expression of intolerable pain. For an instant Henry's step faltered and grew uncertain.

Then old Adam began to behave like a wild man. He pushed himself through the crowd, he flung himself upon the rope as though to tear it down, he called out, "Wait! wait!" Frightened women, fearful of some sinister purpose, tried to grasp and hold him. No man was immediately at hand, or Adam would have been seized and taken away. As for the feeble women — Adam shook them off and laughed at them.

"Let me go, you geese!" said he.

A mounted marshal saw him and rode down upon him; men started from under the ropes to pursue him. But Adam eluded them or outdistanced them. He strode across an open space with a surety which gave no hint of the terrible beating of his heart, until he reached the side of Henry. Him he greeted, breathlessly and with terrible eagerness.

"Henry," said he, gasping, "Henry, do you want me to walk along?"

Henry saw the alarmed crowds, he saw the marshal's



hand stretched to seize Adam, he saw most clearly of all the tearful eyes under the beetling brows. Henry's voice shook, but he made himself clear.

"It's all right," said he to the marshal. "Let him be."

"I saw you were alone," said Adam. "I said, 'Henry needs me.' I know what it is to be alone. I —"

But Adam did not finish his sentence. He found a hand on his, a blue arm linked tightly in his gray arm, he felt himself moved along amid thunderous roars of sound.

"Of course I need you!" said Henry. "I've needed you all along."

Then, old but young, their lives almost ended, but themselves immortal, united, to be divided no more, amid an ever-thickening sound of cheers, the two marched down the street.